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ABSTRACT

The racial composition of participants in a Florida crisis intervention agency's programs indicated that, among the population at risk, black youth were overrepresented in State delinquency and child welfare programs and underrepresented in the agency's intervention services. This practicum was designed to enhance the agency's ability to reach more high risk minority youth. The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter I, "Introduction," describes the urban community involved and the author's work setting and role of the executive director, who conducted this practicum. Chapter II, "Study of the Problem," is comprised of the following sections: (1) problem statement; (2) evidence of the problem; (3) possible causes of the problem; and (4) a literature review. Chapter III, "Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments," discusses the practicum's goals, and means to measure their accomplishment. Chapter IV, "Solution Strategy," describes steps taken by the director, including staff training in cultural sensitivity, extension of outreach services into troubled and minority communities in the county, recruitment of more minority adult and youth leaders for overall agency leadership, and development of a network of services to assist and track youth through the referral process. Chapter V, "Results, Conclusions and Recommendations," summarizes the effects of the strategies employed. Three appendices provide relevant forms, and a list of 13 references are included. (AF)

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Cluster 27

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

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Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Increasing the Number of Minority Youth Ages Twelve Through Fourteen Years Involved in the Crisis Intervention Program by Increasing the Number of Minority Adults Involved in the Provision of Services. Jennings, Susan M., 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Minority Youth/Volunteer Recruitment Natural Helper/Networking/Outreach/Cultural Sensitivity/Case Management/Minority Involvement.

Variations in racial composition among this agency's programs and compared to the youth population at risk, indicated that generally, black youth appeared to be overrepresented in delinquency and child welfare programs and underrepresented in this agency's intervention services

This practicum was designed to enhance the existing programs of this agency in order to reach more of the minority youth at risk of penetrating the state child welfare/juvenile justice system. The writer provided training for the staff in cultural sensitivity, incorporated more cultural sensitive materials into the prevention awareness programs, extended outreach services into the troubled and minority communities in the extreme parts of the county and recruited more minority adult and youth leaders into the organizational components of the overall agency. A network of services was developed to assist and track these youth through the referral process in order to provide more encouragement to those who would otherwise become frustrated with the system and fail to follow through with referrals to needed services.

The results of this practicum included an increase well above the projected two per month in minority youth receiving crisis intervention services through this agency. Other results include the enhancement of this agency's programs via the expertise of a juvenile public defender who is a minority member of the board of directors, a youth leader on the board of advisors who is also of the minority population, and two minority adult leaders on the board of advisors. There has been an increase in self referrals as well as referrals from schools and Safe Place Sites throughout the county.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Agency

The agency is a state licensed and federally recognized program for runaway and troubled youth under the age of eighteen years. It has been in existence since 1974 when prominent cómmunity leaders anticipated the juvenile law change of 1975 toward deinstitutionalization of status offenders and knew that these youth would need a new special service approach. A runaway youth is a youth who has left home, usually without custodial permission, but sometimes at the insistence of the custodian. Troubled youth are youth who are at high risk of running away or acting out behavior that may cause them to penetrate the state child welfare/juvenile justice system. Status offenders are youth who are runaway, truant or ungovernable. The majority of these youth have experienced abuse or family difficulties in the present or past. During the past fourteen years, this agency has expanded from the only residential counseling program for status offenders in the county to a continuum of services in line with the recommendations of a statewide task force report on runaway and troubled youth (1984). This report was requested by and presented to the state legislators and this agency was a member of the task force

In its report to Congress, Federally Supported Centers

Provide Needed Services for Runaway & Homeless Youth (1983), the General Accounting Office (G.A.O.) documented the role of the centers in reuniting families and resolving intrafamilial problems associated with status offense behavior. In its study of seventeen centers, the G.A.O. found that family problems would not have been resolved without the type of service provided by the centers. This agency was one of the seventeen runaway and troubled youth centers studied in the seven out of ten regions of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

This agency has already made significant strides in following the statewide task force suggestions for expanding the non-residential component of its programs in order to reach more of the troubled youth and families in the extreme parts of the county. The benefits to the clients include more accessibility for those in the extreme parts of the county, earlier intervention counseling services for troubled youth and families and transportation to the shelter when and if the crisis has escalated to the point that residential services are believed by the clients to be necessary. Overall, the benefits to the clients are marked improvement in confidence and skills to resolve personal conflicts, including better communication skills and better coping skills. The family unit will function in a much more effective way, with issues of power and responsibility resolved through family mediation. As the

sole provider of short-term, family centered intervention services, this agency is unique in the county. The focus is on strengths in the family and responsibility is shared as each member is responsible for self. Problem-solving and decision-making skills are emphasized and promoted in the counseling and awareness programs.

The schools in this county have become increasingly active in early identification of youth at risk and referring them to this agency for intervention services. Their counseling staff actively work with the counselors of this agency to provide aftercare and follow-up support. The school system provides classrooms as needed for support groups and training.

By providing a nationally known program called Project Safe Place, the agency has been successful in combining the forces and strategies of businesses, education, social services and the community at large to assist youth and families in getting their needs met. Project Safe Place is an outreach program developed by Larry Woolridge, the director of the Y.M.C.A. Runaway Program in Lexington, Kentucky.

Description of the Community

The agency is located in an urban community in a county that is 72 miles long and an average of 18 miles wide and comprises 1,300 square miles. The county is divided into three districts; north, south and central. The population

is 323,055 with approximately 20,549 falling in the age category of 10 years to fifteen years. Of those in this age group, 2,669 are black. The population from birth through age seventeen has been rising at an average rate of 1.8 percent annually since 1980. It is expected to continue to rise another 5.3 percent by 1990. The population is almost equally divided between male and female. Of a total labor force of approximately 148,600, most are employed in service occupations, manufacturing, trade and commerce, government and construction. Only 1.5 percent are employed in agriculture. The agency is located in the geographic center of the county one block from the busiest intersection of state and county highways which dissect the county north/south by east/west.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The administration of this agency is headed by a board of directors made up of prominent professionals and business leaders in the community. The board sets policies and goals and monitors the budget for the agency. The writer is the executive director for the agency and is responsible to the board of directors. The writer's position is responsible for the overall operation of the agency and implements and monitors the policies and budget. The administrative support staff consists of a program evaluator/bookkeeper, a coordinator of computer/secretarial services, with a part-time secretary and a part-time

bookkeeper. A community liaison develops and implements outreach and prevention materials and a volunteer speakers bureau. Program design and development is the responsibility of the director of programs. A volunteer board of advisors, made up of eleven prominent professional and corporate leaders, is available for advice and assistance to all administrative and direct service staff. They participate in public awareness and fund raising campaigns.

Direct management includes a coordinator of volunteers who is responsible for recruiting, training and supervising volunteers in all programs including Project Safe Place. Currently this agency has 103 trained volunteers who augment paid staff in all programs and are trained to respond appropriately to Safe Place calls throughout the county. A Safe Place is a site designated by the staff, whose employees have been trained by the staff, as a safe place for youth to request help.

The coordinator of residential services is trained and certified as a youthcare trainer. He is responsible for coordinating and implementing all aspects of the residential program including training and supervising the youthcare workers, cook and maintenance person. The coordinator of counseling services is responsible for coordinating and implementing the counseling services including residential counseling, nonresidential counseling,

Safe Place crisis intervention, all outreach and prevention services and the in-home counseling program.

Direct service staff is made up of ten full-time and part time certified youthcare workers who are responsible for the implementation and documentation of residential standard operating procedures including supervision of residential youth and activities. Five counselors are responsible for the implementation and documentation of all standard operating procedures of the family counseling/mediation program, as well as aftercare in-home counseling services.

The writer has an undergraduate degree in elementary and early childhood education and a Master's of Education Degree in Guidance and Counseling in elementary through secondary grades. Past experience includes two years as a teacher in an American elementary school and two years ~~teaching~~ experience in The ~~Theran~~/American School in Iran, three years as a nurse on the psychiatric units of a hospital and a mental health center in this county, and a total of six years experience as the director of programs and then executive director in this agency.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

In the nineteenth century, our nation initiated debate on whether public interference was warranted when a youth's behavior indicated poor socialization skills. Many people felt that the youth's behavior was a result of environmental conditions and argued that the role of the state should not be to punish the youth. Since the youth was considered to be a product of his circumstances, it was felt that they should be assisted through corrective and supportive intervention. This thinking culminated in the establishment of the juvenile court. Legal justification for this institution was provided through the doctrine of parens patriae which maintained that in the absence of parental care, it was the state's responsibility to assume a parenting role. This provided for the removal of children from the criminal court for ungovernable behavior and cleared the way for the deinstitutionalization of status offenders. It was thought that the juvenile judge could intervene with corrective treatment rather than punitive measures. Since they were no longer involved in the judicial process, these children lost many of their civil rights (right to trial, requirement of legal representation, etc.). It was felt that these protections were not needed in the juvenile court, since this institution was designed

both to support the child and to remove the individual from punitive treatment.

Unfortunately, the realities of the juvenile court have not coincided with the philosophy which led to its creation. The juvenile court has had to utilize delinquent youth facilities for status offenders due to the lack of more appropriate resources. Studies suggest that status offenders are handled more harshly than delinquents and may be detained for longer periods of time. Advocates for children are protesting the institutionalization of these children in the same facilities with delinquents. Despite current law which defines truancy, runaway and ungovernable behavior as a symptom of a breakdown in the family system and sees this as a need for services rather than incarceration, youth are being removed from their families prior to the family receiving appropriate support services. In 1984, these findings were reported to the state legislators by this agency and other agencies which made up the statewide task force.

Centers for runaway and troubled youth were developed to address the needs of these youth. It has been proven that the most cost-effective means of helping status offenders is through early intervention, counseling and assistance by community-based programs i the least restrictive setting. The behaviors exhibited by youth are recognized as attempts to cope with family problems

such as ineffective communication, marriage conflicts, poor discipline and poor parenting skills. Still, the juvenile court often removes these youth prior to training, support and intervention services.

Data collected from the state social service agency in 1987 shows that twenty-one percent of the youth between the ages of twelve and fifteen years entering the state child welfare/juvenile justice system due to status offenses are black. Data collected during this agency's 1987 program evaluation indicates that twelve percent of the youth served in this agency, in this age group, are black. According to the 1980 census, the target population in this county is thirteen percent black. Briefly stated then, variations in racial composition among this agency's programs and compared to the youth population at risk, indicated that generally, black youth appeared to be over represented in delinquency and child welfare programs and under represented in this agency's intervention services. If the problem were resolved, the ratio of black youth, ages twelve years to fifteen years, receiving intervention services from this agency, would increase and the ratio of the same type youth in the state systems could decrease. This would have some effect on the number of youth in this age group being placed inappropriately.

Evidence of the problem

A study done by the Children's Defense Fund (1988),

indicates that in 1985 approximately 275,000 children and adolescents, 46 percent of whom were members of minority groups, were living away from their families in foster homes, group homes, or child care institutions under the auspices of child welfare agencies. The federal government estimates conservatively that as many as 36,000 children ith special needs are in foster care awaiting placement with adoptive families. Forty-two percent of these are minority children. On February 1, 1985, 49,322 juveniles were being held in public juvenile facilities. Fewer than one-fourth of these youths had been charged with violent acts. Approximately 4,000 of them had committed either no offenses or status offenses. Many of these youth have needs for multiple services.

Another report by the Children's Defense Fund (1978), was based on visits made to adult jails who held children. In this state alone, they found five children being held for non-serious crimes. Throughout the states, C.D.F. found 350 children in jail on the day of the visit. 257 of these were detained while under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. One-third of the children were fourteen or fifteen years old and over nine percent were thirteen or younger. One child was eleven years old. Twenty-five percent were black. A total of thirty-two percent of the juvenile inmate population was black.

One of the rationales for jailing children is that

the community must be protected. The second most common rationale is that the youth him/herself must be protected. The number of youth found to be fully involved in the crime for which they were arrested is small. Most of them played only a small part. The overwhelming majority of them were arrested for minor offenses and status offenses which would not even be criminal if they had been committed by an adult. These children undergo more physical, sexual and emotional abuse in the jails than they would encounter on the streets.

The majority of the youth in the state child welfare/juvenile justice system are there for status offenses. In our state alone, twenty-four percent of these youth are black. These children and their families are in need of services. These needs cannot be met unless their own community acknowledges a sense of investment in their youth.

Possible Causes of the Problem

The reasons for the racial variances in youth receiving services in this agency and those penetrating the local state child welfare/juvenile justice system, have been studied by this writer to determine if there are any policy issues related to eligibility criteria and referral procedures. Eligibility criteria for this agency is nondiscriminatory. Any runaway or troubled youth is eligible for this agency's services regardless of race. There is a possibility that the minority youth is being

referred to the child welfare/juvenile justice more often. When questioned about this, the state intake workers stated that the minority youth often do not come to their attention until their acting out behavior is severe enough to warrant more restrictive services. This indicated that black youth may not have been aware of this agency's free intervention services. Yet, these services are promoted throughout the school system in the county and the awareness would seem to reach the black youth as often as the white youth.

The traveling distance in the county is such that it could discourage the black youth from traveling to the agency for services. Since Project Safe Place is available to the black youth, it would seem that the problem of distance would be resolved for the back youth as for the white youth. Further study of the number of black youth reaching this agency through Project Safe Place indicates that none of the black youth seeking the services come to the agency through this source of entry. The black youth who do reach the services are usually brought in by law enforcement officers or state intake workers. Briefly stated then, the probable cause of the problem was that black youth were not using the intervention services even though they were aware of these services. Instead, they were waiting until their problems led to acting out behavior that required more legal and state intervention.

A 1980 Gallop Poll indicated that one in seven youth runs away at some point during their childhood. The total nty population of black youth, ages ten years to fifteen years, is 2,669. One seventh of the population is 381 black youth at risk of being a status offender. That figure thirteen percent of the population at risk. Yet, this agency was only serving twelve percent and twenty-four ercent was penetrating the state child welfare/juvenile justice system because they were not getting to intervention services early enough to prevent more serious problems.

Literature Review

Concerns for these black youth and their family led this writer to do a literature review to see what researchers believe to be an effective outreach technique to reach youth and families; especially those in the black population. A review of the literature brought to light an interesting aspect of the out reach program, specifically Project Safe Place, that was overlooked when the program was put into place at this agency. The black culture tend not to trust, and therefore may not seek assistance from, those agencies that may not be sensitive to their individual needs.

Lauffer (1982) addresses the problems of resource acquisition, development, and orchestration. His guide includes instructions on how to teach people to make the best use of the resources potentially available to them.

He believes that many families, especially those in the lower socio-economic level, may not be aware that there are services available to them. Even when services are known, they may seem inaccessible to them, They are more familiar with state agencies and may avoid seeking assistance from fear of having the child taken away. Thus, they struggle with their problems until removal of the child is their only alternative. Certain ethnic groups turn for help to family members or friends. They have deeply held cultural values that maintain that you do not ask strangers for help with your problems.

Lauffer proposes a natural helping system. This system is made up of all those persons who help people in trouble on a personal rather than a professional or institutional basis. They include parents, relatives, friends and neighbors. People do not want to feel dependent on others who care little about them as individuals. Professional services are sometimes oriented only to the part of the person that the agency's technology can deal with. Making use of the natural system can strengthen the bonds between the agency's services and the elements in the system. It is often easier and less threatening to seek help from friends, neighbors, relatives and others who have faced problems similar to their own. These natural care givers dispense support, advice and counsel. This writer's first reaction to this was positive. If you cannot get the people

to come in for services, this would be a good way to get the services to them. With further consideration, this writer recognized the disadvantages of this system. Lauffer, himself, points out several of these. There is not guarantee that people will be available when they are needed or that the advice they give is not harmful. Relatives and friends may be drained and feel unfairly exploited. The helpee may resent the helper if their advice proves inadequate. Perhaps, if this technique were used, there is a way to train the natural helper and the helpee to understand and avoid these dangers.

Rossi, Gilmartin and Dayton (1982) differ from Lauffer in their views. They believe that people with multiple needs often times feel like a "tennis ball" bounced back and forth between agencies until they lose faith in any agency and refuse services. For a three year period from 1979 to 1982, the State of California sponsored efforts in three counties to improve coordination among the agencies supplying services. These efforts revealed a wealth of information on this topic. Building on this information, Rossi, Gilmartin and Dayton attempt to describe succinctly the various approaches to interagency coordination. The benefits to interagency coordination are described as improved staff effectiveness, improved public image, improved accessibility for clients, reduced fragmentation of services and greater efficiency. Often a client coming

to one agency needs services best provided by another. To be effectively coordinated, agencies would need to share information about their services and develop a common resource guide from which to make referrals. This technique would benefit the state social service agency. Social service workers could use the referral guide to refer families to the least restrictive agencies first, maintain contact with those agencies and coordinate follow-up services to see that all families have the chance to receive front end services before being referred to the courts and ending up in the state system.

Polk (1987) also describes a natural helpers theory. In 1985, seven different state and local service agencies based in the city of Bethel, used funds from the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) of the National Institute of Mental Health, to aid Alaska's troubled youth in crisis situations. Faced with the stresses of a rapidly changing culture and geographic isolation, these youth became substance abusers. The project tries to ease the pain of change and reduce the sense of geographic isolation by training local village residents as natural helpers. The idea is that in time, people in the village will be able to help their kids with the hardest problems without depending on a distant agency. The agencies train two people, from each of the surrounding

villages, about the kinds of problems youth and families might have and how to intervene in a crisis situation. The natural helpers also discuss problems they see and help to make agency personnel aware of the needs of the villagers. Youth and parents turn to these natural helpers for immediate assistance. The helpers arrange for relatives, the family or friends to support those troubled. Thus, a local and familiar person can keep a bad situation from becoming worse and can coordinate a more permanent solution.

Hegner (1987) uses natural helpers in the form of peer support groups to help students who are chronic attendance/tardy problems. Personal growth groups are peer oriented and primarily information and problem-solving sessions designed to provide an atmosphere of trust and support. Major topics include self-esteem, values, decision making, effective communication, stress management, assertiveness training, sexuality, divorce, alcoholism and school success vs. truancy. This program, at Rochester School District (Pennsylvania) determines the needs of students with chronic school problem behaviors and works with students, families, social service agencies and alternative educational programs to resolve conflicts. Chronic offenders are identified, assessed individually and referred to appropriate services, including the support

groups described above. Working with schools to identify those youth whose behaviors are indicators of needed services may be a way for this agency to reach troubled youth and provide them with front end services before they get involved with the court system. This might be a good way to coordinate agencies and direct youth and families to the least restrictive services first. Peer groups are a very effective prevention technique.

Rhodes, Duncon Hall (1987) recognized a relationship in delinquency and problems in school. They describe a juvenile awareness program in which inmates, serving a life sentence, wanted to help youth avoid pitfalls to which they fell victim. Youth were taken to the prisons to hear these inmates' stories. From this idea, Rhodes, Duncon and Hall developed a program in which student's peers were trained to help disciplinary problem students avoid delinquent lifestyles. Their training was designed to educate them about the futility of school disruptiveness, delinquency and criminal behavior while motivating them to strive for excellence and self-improvement. The peer counseling training taught basic listening skills and how and when to use problem-solving, decision-making and referral procedures. The peer counselors received virtually the same training provided the adult staff counselors. With the exception of more visual aids, no modification was made.

Although the training was successful, the peer counselors' experience with the disciplinary problem students was mixed. As a group, the problem students were very intimidating to the peer counselors. It was discovered that the peer could work effectively with the disciplinary problem students if the number of counselors present was higher than the number of students present. The counselors appeared to be less intimidated by the smaller number of students. The disciplinary problem students were more socially appropriate. That is, they were more accepting of ideas and suggestions made by the counselors and offered to help with activities within the group as well as with extra activities scheduled outside the group. When there were more counselors than students, the students displayed less resistance to change. This writer found this article to be very interesting. Perhaps fewer peer counselors and one adult might have been as effective as more peer counselors. The adult could act as a facilitator only when necessary to influence cooperation.

The Department of Education at the University of Southern Illinois (1980) published a model and fifty strategies for recruiting students into vocational education. This publication gives directions for bublic relation strategies. Although the public awareness strategies are directed to the recruitment of youth into vocational education, this writer found much of the

information can be directed to the goal of making black youth and families aware of the services that are provided by this agency. It is suggested that caution should be used by those not familiar with the cultural differences, it is good to solicit the advice of someone from the target population. The following are ideas from this article that this writer considered in implementing this practicum.

1. Go where youth and families spend time such as community centers and organizations, churches and community health centers.

2. Include pictures of ethnic minorities in information materials.

3. Consult with persons from particular target groups.

4. Provide articles and advertisements to school newspapers.

5. Release balloons with messages on them at public events and athletic functions.

6. Develop bias-free brochures for use in community displays or wherever they will reach the target populations.

7. Put brochures in utility statements.

8. Have an open house and invite leaders from the communities of the target populations; such as leaders in the churches, Rotary, Lions, senior citizens, V.F.W., P.T.A. or P.T.O.

9. Have a poster contest in the schools.

10. Make a special effort to contact target populations through teachers and guidance counselors.

11. Ask a journalism class to design advertisements for the news media.

12. Use speakers from the target populations to make presentations.

McGrath and Pekelo-Bielen (1983) offer a step-by-step guide to creating a speakers bureau. They suggest that if any agency does not have a speakers bureau, they should negotiate with business and professionals as volunteers to speak for the agency. They go on to describe public speaking as persuasive conversation adapted to fit the occasion and the audience. Every speech has an introduction, body and conclusion. A point to remember when writing your speech is to write it in simple speaking terms. Speak as if you are having a conversation with someone at the same level as your audience.

C.R.W. Associates, Inc., of Detroit, MI. (1985) developed a model that provides step-by-step strategies and material for recruiting minority students in secondary and postsecondary vocational programs. Their idea of a working network of volunteers from the community to promote the agency's programs would meet the needs of this agency very well. They also suggested a community seminar in which you address the image of the agency by describing the programs to build trust. Particular emphasis was placed

on reaching the minority population. Explaining the programs can help to alleviate the fear of the unknown. While explaining the services provided, you would be taking the first steps in developing a relationship that can promote feelings of caring and understanding. A good way to do this is to meet the yo h and families in surroundings that are familiar to them. Perhaps making presentations to students in their classrooms, speaking at their clubs or organizations such as boy scout and girl scout meetings. Invite them in to visit the agency or to participate in an agency activity. The ideas in this model are all good ideas that could bring information while building trust.

It appears that few attempts have been made to concentrate on the problem of outreach and public relations specifically for runaway shelters and crisis intervention programs. Although the literature reviewed was geared to the recruitment of students, especially minorities for vocational education, it was easily modified into public awareness strategies for this agency.

When this writer began reviewing the literature, the intent was to find a more effective public awareness and outreach technique to reach the minority population. The writer discovered that, while making them aware of programs was important, it was not enough to bring them in for services. It was also necessary to overcome this population's fear of seeking help from a human service

agency. This was done by providing training for the staff so that the staff provided information and familiarizing experiences to students and parents. Many of these ideas were used to do this.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

The following were goals for this practicum:

As the number of black youth between the ages of twelve years and fifteen years, who received this agency's intervention services increased, this agency's monthly statistics indicated an increase in the number these youth participating in this agency's intervention services.

Since there was no accurate way to measure whether youth in the state child welfare/juvenile justice system has decreased this year, the measurements of success of this project was based only on the increased number of these youth participating in this agency's programs during, and at the time of completion of, this project. It is anticipated that an increase in the number of youth participating in this agency's programs will indicate a decline in the number of these youth penetrating the child welfare/juvenile justice system. In order to accomplish this goal, each month of this project, at least nine black youth, under the age of fifteen years, did receive intervention services through this agency. This was an increase of at least two black youth per month.

The following behavioral objectives were used for this practicum:

1. During the project, this agency's monthly demographic statistics will show an increase by at least

two in the number of black youth, under the age of fifteen years, who have been reached by this agency's outreach (Safe Place) program.

2. During the project, this agency's files will contain an increase of at least two in the number of agreement forms signed, by black youth under the age of fifteen years, to participate in this agency's intervention services either directly or through referral.

3. Follow-up studies done one week following termination of services will show that the black youth, under the age of fifteen years, who participated in the intervention program, are still at home with no involvement with the child welfare/juvenile justice system and receiving aftercare services if aftercare was reccommend.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Troubled youth are often in need of and are eligible for a wide variety of community-based resources. Typically, these needed services are not accessed due to a lack of awareness on the part of the youth. This agency developed an awareness program to reach the youth in the local school system. Posters were printed and placed in each school to display the availability of Safe Place Sites and this agency's crisis number. Counselors were sent to the schools to make presentations about the Safe Place Project and to explain the services available through this agency's programs. These presentations were attended by faculty and students of all grades. These efforts proved effective in reaching troubled youth of the Caucasian race when these youth began to use the Safe Place Sites. The awareness did not increase the number of black youth entering our intervention program through Project Safe Place. Those black youth who do receive services through this agency continue to come to the agency by way of the state child welfare/juvenile system. Their problems have already escalated to the point that residential services and more long term intervention is required.

The model published by the Department of Education at the University of Southern Illinois (1980), the step-by-step guides of McGrath and Pekelo-Bielen (1983)

and the model developed by C.R.W. Associates, Inc. (1985) were used to enhance this agency's school presentations and awareness campaign. Using the expertise of two of our youthcare workers, who are of the minority race, a review of the literature was presented to and discussed with the counselors during a routine staff meeting. These models and guides enabled the counselors to consider their presentations in the schools so that they might reach the the black youth more effectively.

In 1987, this state's legislators recognized that too many youth were penetrating the child welfare/juvenile justice system prior to receiving less restrictive services. They revised the juvenile laws again. This time, they mandated that the state social service agency set up a casemanagement system that would provide a continuum of services in an effort to defer youth from the child welfare/juvenile justice system and refer them to agencies such as this to resolve their problems and keep them home with their families. When the state social workers intervene with less restrictive referrals, the youth and family often do not follow through with referrals. A tracking system was needed to enable the workers to continue to encourage and support the family in the follow through process.

Lauffer (1982), Polk, and Hegner (1987) are postulating the use of a support system made up of peers and familiar

individuals who are trained to be natural helpers. All three express the idea that encouraging youth to seek crisis intervention from unfamiliar agencies may not be as effective as developing and training a support system in the youth's own environment. Lauffer points out that those in the lower socio-economic level often avoid seeking assistance from the state agency for fear of having their child taken away from them. Natural helpers in the community would strengthen the bonds between the state services and the targeted population.

Rossi, Gilmartin and Dayton (1982) stress interagency coordination in tracking youth and families through the system and assisting them in receiving services from agencies to which they may be referred. Assigning a natural helper, in line with Lauffer, Polk and Hagner's suggestions, to assist youth and families in following through with the referrals of the state agency would help to alleviate the problems of following through with the referrals given by the state agency. This would require a real commitment on the part of the natural helper as well as a feeling of investment in the family's success.

Hegner's idea of a peer support group involved the use of many youth who share similar backgrougnd and suffered from poor skills in communication, socialization, decisionmaking and problem-solving. It would require having at least two youth, of the same age range as the group,

who have developed these skills and would serve as group facilitators and role models. This process is already in use at this agency. Youth groups meet weekly in all three parts of the county. In order to resolve the problem of involving black youth in this agency's services, this writer would need to recruit one or two black youth who would serve as a role model and would be willing to attend trainin to be a facilitator.

The limited time that this writer has would not allow time for adequate recruitment, training and implementation. The youth who have needs to be met, would first have to receive services to meet these more pressing needs before they could focus on the skills mentioned by Hegner. Not until their more basic needs are met can they be motivated to participate in a group activity which involves skills on which they may not be ready to focus. This may be a project to develop further when this writer has a number of black youth involved in the program who can be helped to deal with anger and develop motivation to focus on social skills.

Lauffer's idea of developing a network of family support is also an idea that may be useful once a family has gotten their immediate needs met and is able to focus on family strengths. It would require working with the family and their support system. Many of the families we see have a limited support system. With both parents

working, most families have less time to develop a strong support of friends, neighbors and relatives. In order to help them build a strong support system, this writer would have to first get them to work with the staff in this agency to learn where their strengths are and how to use them. Still, that is a project that would require that the black family come to the agency to request assistance and be motivated enough to work with the agency's professional staff. The problem is getting them to trust the agency and staff enough to seek our assistance.

Polk's idea of training adults to provide the services that are usually provided by the professional crisis counselors and sending them to the youth who need services could be incorporated into and provide enhancement to an already developed program in this agency. It would require working with adults who are willing to go to the youth and have an investment in the youth's success. The adult would have to be familiar to the youth and provide a good role model. These adults would have to have met their own needs and be able to concentrate more on the youth and family's needs. The adult would have to be culturally sensitive and able to serve as a liaison between this agency and the black youth, families and community. The outreach and prevention within the youth's own community and culture, as described by Polk, could be the initial step toward a timely implementation of each orientation described in

the literature review.

Selected Solution

The selected solution to the problem of reducing the ratio of minority adolescents in the state social service system was to bring crisis intervention to minority youth, ages twelve years through fourteen years. The writer attempted to develop a volunteer group made up of respected black community leaders who would serve as natural helpers to the youth in their community. These volunteers would work as Safe Place volunteers who would also function as co-counselors and assistant casemanagers. They would provide a tracking system to track these youth through the services to which they were referred. This involved two interrelated strategies.

The first strategy was to establish a Safe Place Site in one of the predominately minority communities located in this county. Consideration was given to the establishments in these communities which would be most likely to serve both youth and families. Recreational and community centers were contacted. A meeting was set up to discuss this practicum project with the director of one of these centers. At the recommendation of the center director, this writer spoke at the next meeting of the local NAACP. The members of this organization expressed concern at the lack of minority involvement in the Safe Place Project and offered to encourage more

involvement by respected black adult leaders in their community. As a result, this writer was contacted within the week by the director of parks and recreation. All employees of the recreational and community centers in the south part of this county were scheduled to be trained as Safe Place Site Volunteers. That is, they were trained to conduct the recreational and community centers as Safe Place Sites. They were trained to respond to youth requesting assistance from these designated Safe Place Sites. This was accomplished in two six hour training sessions, conducted by this agency's counselors, in active listening skills, assessment skills, and referral procedures for various requests.

The success of recruiting these establishments as Safe Place Sites can be attributed to the presentations made to the director and the NAACP. This writer only offered to provide assistance in the enhancement of their already beneficial services. No attempt was made to tell them what they should or should not do, nor to change what they were already successfully accomplishing. The benefits of more community awareness through the publicized Safe Place Kickoff activities were emphasized. They were encouraged to play a major roll in these activities and become the prominent figures in all publicity. This would bring their achievements to the public eye. Their enthusiasm in the planning of the kickoff ceremonies lead to the

success of the establishment of the first Safe Place Sites in the predominantly black neighborhood in the south part of the county.

Once the Safe Place Site was established, the recruitment of black adult leaders was planned. The director of the recreational community center accepted this as a personal challenge. Due to the requirements of extensive background checks in this state, any individual who is employed or volunteers to work with youth must wait until the results of the background check are received before this agency's staff can conduct the volunteer training for individual Safe Place Volunteers. Although there have been positive responses to the director's requests for black volunteers, the training has not been conducted for the reasons given above.

The second strategy was to set up a system of natural helpers and a tracking system to see that the minority youth who request assistance from the Safe Place Sites receive the services to which they are referred. The fact that there were no Safe Place Volunteers trained as natural helpers during this practicum period made it impossible to complete this strategy as planned. Still, a system for tracking the youth and their families was intitiated in the form of a network of services for these youth. The writer contacted agencies to which this agency frequently referes youth and families. This writer developed

a referral form and a follow-up form that would aid the counselors of this agency in tracking these youth and families through this network of services. When the counselors in this writer's agency refers a youth to an agency in the network, the counselor mails a referral form to that agency. In one month following the receipt of a referral form, or following the completion of services, the network agency returns the follow-up form. This provides the referring counselor a system for tracking youth through the referral network. It also provides them the opportunity to contact those youth and families who have not followed through with the referral and to offer more services or to encourage them to continue seeking assistance.

In order to maintain ethical standards, this system requires a signed release of information form signed by the youth and the youth's guardian. These forms are signed at the initial contact with this agency's counselors. A copy of this form is sent with the referral form.

The agencies participating in this referral network signed a memorandum of understanding which indicates the criteria for referring to their agency and the services which they offer troubled youth and families. These agreements are placed in the counselors referral manuals for easy access. The counselor allows the client to select the referral source and explains that they will be assisted in anyway that they feel is necessary to follow through

with the referral.

The agencies participating in the referral network have met twice to discuss the success of this process. At this time, there are nine agencies who have signed the memorandum of understanding. These agencies include private for profit as well as private not-for profit agencies. Although the social service agency, the school attendance officers and law enforcement officers have not signed memorandums of understanding, they have met with the referral network to offer their support and cooperation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

During the three months that this practicum was implemented, the monthly statistics did show an increase of at least two minority youth, under the age of fifteen years per month who participated in the crisis intervention services offered by this agency.

Demographics during the 1987/1988 evaluation indicated an average of two minority youth, under the age of fifteen years, receiving intervention services through this agency per month. Demographics from July 1988 through August 1988 indicate an average of four minority youth under the age of fifteen years receiving intervention services through this agency each month. During the months of this practicum, October through December, the average number of these youth receiving intervention services increased to seven.

The success of this first objective can be partly attributed to the increased number of presentations made in the public junior high school system by this agency's director of programs and counselors. The presentations were increased in an effort to reach more youth, ages twelve through fourteen years, of all races. The presentations were enhanced to include not only information about this agency's services, but also more role playing with more classroom participation. The role playing was used to

demonstrate youth and parent communication processes. Communication problems suggested by the students were acted out to demonstrate the more common faulty communication processes and then the more productive communication processes. These demonstrations gave the youth some examples of how a problem can be turned into a learning experience. Eight youth were referred to the agency either by a school guidance counselor or by themselves after hearing about the agency at school. (One of these youth was only eleven years old.) Referrals due to school presentations doubled during this time period.

The increase in participation of minority youth can also be attributed to the presentations made to the churches in the black community by the employees of this agency who are members of those churches. Since these employees already had the trust of the fellow members of their church, they were able to make a more successful presentation. Perhaps the members felt more comfortable hearing the presentation from someone close to them. Four youth were referred to the agency by their parents who heard of the agency at their church. These referrals were the first referrals to report that they had heard of our services through their church.

Three youth were referred to the agency from newly established Safe Place Sites in their neighborhood. Two youth were referred from one neighborhood and the other

was referred from another neighborhood. Since the employees at these sites had only been trained for one week, this may indicate that the Safe Place Sites are proving effective in these neighborhoods.

Four youth were referred by police departments and one youth was referred by the sheriff's department. The police departments and the sheriff's departments are Safe Place Sites. Had these youth been picked up by the police, they would have been referred by the state social service agency. Three youth were referred by the state social services agency for intervention services and not as dependents of the state. Referrals through the police departments and social service agency remained about the same.

The number of agreement forms signed indicate an achievement of more than the two per month anticipated in the second objective. Overall there was an increase of three per month in the number of minority youth ages twelve to fifteen years in the intervention programs of this agency. There was also an increase in the number of minority youth ages fifteen and older who participated in this agency's intervention programs.

Of those minority youth between the ages of twelve years and fifteen years, ten were seen non-residentially and referred to other services. Two are participating in the in-home counseling program and eight stayed in the

shelter for five days before returning home. (Of these eight, two are still in the shelter at the time this report was written.)

Follow-up studies indicate that all but two of these youth remained at home with their families during the practicum period. This indicates successful achievement of the third objective. Of the ten youth seen non-residentially and referred to other agencies, eight are continuing services with those agencies, and two did not follow through with the referral made but returned to this agency when another family crisis erupted.

All of these youth signed agreement forms to participate in this agency's direct intervention services or referral services. These agreement forms contain rules to be followed while participating in the program and a goal selected by the youth. Five of these youth signed behavioral contracts with their parents.

Three of these youth, one who remained in the shelter for five days and two who did not follow through with referrals, are continuing in aftercare services at this time.

During this practicum, this writer wrote a letter to the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP) in Washington D.C. requesting materials to provide assistance in achieving the goals of this practicum. This letter was submitted for a grant and as a result, this agency was

granted free consultation services. A consultant is being sent to this agency to evaluate this agency's programs and community and to provide assistance in setting up a culturally sensitive program. An additional outcome of this letter was an invitation from the National Prevention Implementation Program (NPIP) to participate in the establishment of a National Youth Coalition (NYC)for the prevention of substance abuse among youth.

NPIP paid all expenses for this writer to travel first to Baltimore, MD. in November and then to Nashville, TN. in December to train youth in the development of a youth coalition. This writer is now in the process of training youth in this county to start a youth coalition. In recruiting youth for this training, this writer developed a rapport with a minority youth who is a leader in a local high school. As a result, this youth is now a member of this agency's board of advisors. He has already expressed several ideas that will not only assist in the recruitment of youth for the coalition, but will also bring more awareness of our programs into the minority communities.

This writer also wrote to the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, DC. and received literature and posters to enhance the cultural sensitivity of this agency's pregnancy and substance abuse prevention programs.

The presentations made to civic organizations and school personnel in an effort to increase minority

participation in the agency's programs proved successful in recruiting two adults (the dean of a high school and the assistant principal of a junior high school, who is a minority) on the board of advisors and one minority adult (the juvenile public defender) to the board of directors. A referral network was established to set up a tracking system as described by Rossi, Gilmartin and Dayton.

This practicum was successful in achieving the stated goal of increasing the number of minority youth, ages twelve years through fourteen years, who participate in this agency's crisis intervention services. The increase of three per month more than the stated goal of two per month indicates successful use of strategies described in the literature review. The selected strategies planned to achieve these results did not fully materialize. The first strategy of establishing a Safe Place Site in a predominately minority neighborhood was carried out successfully. The writer had hoped to establish a system of natural helpers as described by Polk and Sophie (1987). Due to the delay in completing background checks on those minorities who were interested in volunteering to become natural helpers, this strategy was not realized before the completion of this practicum. Still, this strategy will be continued beyond the completion of this report.

In conclusion, the two selected strategies are still

in the early stages and will not be fully effective until a later date. Other strategies considered in the literature review of this practicum have also proven successful. The guide offered by McGrath and Pekelo-Bielen (1983) and the models developed by C.R.W. Associates, Inc., of Detroit, MI. (1985) proved very helpful in culturally sensitizing this agency's in school and community presentations

Recommendations

Based on the results of this practicum experience, this writer recommends that agencies who work with troubled youth and families and who want to reach the minorities in need of their services, plan at least two strategies. First enhance the cultural sensitivity of the program. 1. Use posters and literature that are culturally sensitive to enhance the outreach efforts. 2. Use the guide and model mentioned above to enhance the presentations made in the schools and community. 3. Recruit the assistance of respected minority leaders who are already sensitive to the needs of their race and are committed to providing services. 4. Ask these minority leaders to join your board and share their expertise so that you can assist each other in a common goal. 5. Call on the youth who play a leadership role. And above all, listen to and consider their suggestions. 6. Meet the youth and families in their own environment instead of expecting them to come to you. Respect their environment. 7. Consider the frustrations

they will meet when referring them to other services and assist them through the system whenever possible. By doing this, anyone can become a natural helper regardless of their race.

The second strategy that proved very successful in this practicum and is highly recommended, is to write to the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, 8201 Greensboro Drive Suite 600, McLean, Virginia 22102. This office provides information and support to community-based prevention programs for high-risk youth. This writer recommends that organizations working with high-risk youth make it a priority to get on the OSAP mailing list. Another agency to contact is the Children's Defense Fund at 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC. 20036. From this organization, an abundance of culturally sensitive materials may be purchased.

With the information and materials acquired from these agencies, the initial steps can be taken to enhance the program and train the staff in preparation for recruiting prominent minority leaders from the community to work together to achieve a common goal of providing services to minority youth and families.

Disseminating the Practicum Results

This writer will disseminate the information resulting from this practicum experience to the managers of this agenciy's state and federal grant contracts. This

information will also be disseminated among the fellow members of the Southeastern Network of Youth and Family Services. This organization is made up of agencies similar to the agency in which this writer works and in which this practicum was conducted.

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APPENDIX A

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR NETWORK AGENCIES

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

and

_____

do agree that the attached basic provisions will guide our working relationship in our joint effort to serve youth and families.

_____
year

_____
Agency

_____
Susan Jennings, M.Ed.
Executive Director

_____
Signature

_____
Title

_____
Date

_____
Date

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(over)

WORKING RELATIONSHIP

1. To provide an agency linkage for the benefit of youth and families.

2. To provide a better understanding of interagency referral criteria.

3. To provide an exchange and update of service information to youth and families and other agencies in County.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF YSC

1. will include the name of this agency on the ' ; list of referral sources.

2. When referring clients, ' . will adhere to the criteria stated below.

3. will display brochures, literature and other information on the referral agency as requested by this referral agency.

4. will assist the youth and family in making contact with this referral source when appropriate.

5. will act as a referral source for the agency in this agreement by providing shelter (when possible) to youth during a family crisis and working with the agency to alleviate the immediate crisis.

AGREEMENT OF REFERRAL AGENCY

_____ agrees to accept referrals who meet the following criteria:

_____

_____

_____

The following criteria would not be appropriate to this agency:

_____

_____

When conducts their follow-up studies, this agency would give a yes or no response when asked if the referred youth and/or family followed up on the referral information given.

Contact person(s) for referrals:

_____ Phone _____

_____ Phone _____

_____ Phone _____

APPENDIX B

REFERRAL FORM
FOR NETWORK AGENCIES

TO: _____

_____

_____

_____
(phone number)

RE: Referral of _____

DATE: _____

This family/youth has participated in _____sessions
Counselor _____ at .

The following agreement was made between this counselor and this family/youth:

1. That the youth, _____and _____
shall participate in the counseling program at _____.

2. That the family shall participate in other programs at the suggestion of the counseling/treatment staff at _____.
Parent Support Group_____
Parent Training _____
Awareness Groups _____
Other_____

3. In order that the staff at .c. may be aware of compliance with this recommendation, the staff at _____ is requested to advise the staff at ., following the first counseling session, of the date of that session, those present for counseling, the attituded of each toward counseling and whether additional counseling is necessary.

Signed: _____
(Counselor)

Signed: _____
(Youth)

Signed: _____
(Parent)

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP REPORT FORM FOR NETWORK AGENCIES

FOLLOW-UP REPORT

TO: _____

FROM: _____

RE: _____

DATE: _____

1. Following your referral of _____ the first counseling session was held on _____ The following persons were in attendance:

2. The attitude of the various family members present toward the counseling was as follows:

Youth: _____

_____

Mother: _____

_____

Father: _____

_____

3. I feel that additional counseling is [ ] is not [ ] needed and have so advised the family. I estimate at least _____ additional sessions will be required.

4. The family has set goals and developed a plan to attain their goals Yes ☐ No ☐

5. I believe the family will continue with counseling Yes ☐ No ☐

_____

Counselor

Date: _____